



Department of Public Works and Engineering
Planning & Development Services Division

Floodplain Management Office

Frequently Asked Questions about: Floodways

What is the Floodway?

The Floodway is the channel, bayou or other watercourse and adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation more than the height specified for the site in the flood insurance study.

Who determines the Floodway?

Engineers working for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are charged with determination of the regulatory Floodway in accordance with the FEMA guidelines.

Will the Floodway ever be reduced?

The ultimate goal of floodplain management in Houston will be to have all the floodways limited to the bayou right-of-way. To accomplish this in some watersheds will require the future construction of major channel improvements or reduction in flows from regional storm water detention facilities.

Can I build on my vacant land in the Floodway?

Per Chapter 19 of the City Code of Ordinances, new construction on vacant land in the floodway will be permitted if the performance standards for the construction are met.

Can I repair or rebuild my home in the Floodway?

Yes. Permits for repair or reconstruction for buildings in the floodway will be issued if the performance standards are met. Repairs over 50% of the market value will trigger Substantial Improvement Requirements (*see FAQ on Substantial Improvements*).

Can I request a variance in the Floodway?

An applicant may file a request for variance at any time. However, no variance may be granted for development on vacant land in a floodway, and no variance may be granted after an applicant has complied with the provisions of this chapter and a permit has been issued.

For fees and more information, contact the City of Houston Floodplain Management Office (FMO) at (832) 394-8854, come by the FMO at 1002 Washington Avenue or check out the Floodplain Information on the web at http://www.publicworks.houstontx.gov/notices/flood_plain_guidelines.html